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No. 106

AMERICAN CONSULATE GENERAL  
Belfast, Northern Ireland, October 14, 1948.

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SUBJECT: Communist Activities in Northern Ireland.

THE HONORABLE

THE SECRETARY OF STATE

WASHINGTON 25, D.C.

Sir:

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I have the honor to enclose herewith transcript of the addresses given by members of the Communist Party on the waste ground at High Street, Belfast, on Sunday, October 3, 1948. The speakers, Jim Prendergast, Betty Sinclair and W.A. McCullough are all well known Communists, and known to the Department through previous despatches on the same subject. The Sunday meetings are now commencing at 3.30 p.m. rather than at 7.30 p.m. due to the fact that it is now dark by 7.30 p.m. and there are no suitable arrangements for lighting the area.

The splendid address of Mr. Spaak was topical, and of course was taken to indicate the alleged fact that the Western Powers were preparing for war. A considerable amount was said about the fact that Russia was not talking war, and that all such talk came from the Western Powers. The addresses of course did not point to the fact that although Russia is not talking war, she is, and has been for far too long preparing for war.

Respectfully yours,

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Wm. A. Smale  
American Consul

23 NOV 16 1948

Enclosure:

Transcript of notes taken  
at Communist Party Meeting,  
High Street, Belfast, on  
October 3, 1948.

Transmitted to Department in  
original and hectograph copies.  
Copy American Embassy, London.

File No. 800

Wm. A. Smale/Vlc

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Communist Party of Northern Ireland

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Sole enclosure to Despatch No. 108 dated October 14, 1948 from  
Wm. A. Smale, American Consul at American Consulate General,  
Belfast, Northern Ireland, on the subject: "Communist  
Activities in Northern Ireland".

This meeting commenced at 3.30 p.m. and terminated at  
5.30 p.m. About 250 persons were present. Communist and  
Socialist literature was on sale, and the meeting passed over  
without incident. A throw-in collection was taken up but  
the amount was not made known.

The speakers were:

Jim PRENDERGAST who acted as Chairman

Betty SINCLAIR

W.H. MCCULLOUGH

PRENDERGAST in opening the meeting said:

"We in the Communist Party believe that it is the duty  
of our organisation which is composed of workers and the  
leaders of the working class to make clear to the people  
of Belfast what the position is and how it affects the  
citizens of this town. Clearly there is now no doubt in  
anybody's mind when he picks up his newspaper, or listens  
in to the radio, when he listens to the speech of Mr.  
Bevin or Mr. Spaak or Mr. Vyshinsky that the question  
before the people is that of war or peace. And for us in  
Belfast this is a question of great urgency because now  
as the armies are being marshalled in Western Europe, now  
that the first steps are being taken for the purpose of  
taking up intervention against the Soviet Union, Belfast  
will be right in the centre of the atom bomb war. It  
won't be in the centre for very long because most of you  
realise that an atom bomb means that no matter who wins,  
the working class will lose anyway. We will lose in  
the sense that the devastation will eclipse anything we  
have experienced before in warfare.

"Therefore, we in the Communist Party say, that it is  
in the interest of the masses of the people to take an  
interest in the issues which are being debated in Paris.  
Everybody who has suffered the horrors of the last war,  
everybody who has lost a son or a daughter, husband or  
brother, and you who have suffered in the blitzes, you are  
the people who by your intervention, by the expression of  
your opinions, can stop that crazy race to war which is  
being prepared before your very eyes. Not only could  
Belfast suffer damage and destruction if these preparations  
are allowed to go unchallenged, but these very preparations  
are putting on the shoulders of the workers a tremendous

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and terrible burden by a reduction in the living standards in so far as the well-being of the mass of the people is concerned.

"In yesterday's Daily Worker I read an article by the Parliamentary Correspondent of that paper which showed that for all the wars that were fought by the British Empire, we are paying in interest so far as the Crimean War. War has never paid any dividends. We in The Communist Party are in the front of the fight for peace. We have the prospect before us of a frightful war.

"Take one example alone. In the war just ended 5,000 schools were completely destroyed as the result of the Fascist air raids on this country. Because we have failed to reduce the armed forces and due to our expenditure on re-armament since the end of the last war only 16 schools have been rebuilt in Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Now it is almost certain that no further schools will be built.

"This means that the children of the working class will have no schools to go to. There have been no hospitals built since 1914 and this is directly the outcome of the two world wars in which Britain has been engaged.

"It is said that we have to make all these sacrifices. That we have to let our children go without schools, that we cannot afford to build hospitals, that we cannot afford to raise wages, that we cannot afford to introduce new machinery into the mines because we are concerned with the menace of the Soviet Union and the countries of Eastern Europe.

"I want to say from this platform that we in the Communist Party have no apologies to make when we say that those who described the Soviet Union as a menace to civilization are liars. They are trying to deceive the peoples of Western Europe into believing that a country with a more consistent record for the fight for peace is warmongering. I want to reject the lie and the slander that the Great Socialist Republics of the Soviet Union which were war torn in a struggle against Imperialist aggression are anxious to go to war with their fellow workers of the West".

At this stage he described the different acts of the Soviet Union from 1917 towards peace.

"You will find that the incitement to war is not coming from the U.S.S.R. It is coming from America. I want to remind you of one thing. In 1926 during the general strike of the miners - the men who saved Britain's bacon - the Great Soviet Union sent subscriptions to them. We will have to decide whether we are going to march forward with Socialism or whether we are going to be pushed into war

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behind Truman, Churchill, De Gaulle and the rest of the warmongers".

Prendergast then introduced Betty Sinclair as one "who has a more consistent record in the struggle for peace than any member of the Stormont Cabinet".

Betty SINCLAIR said: "With regard to this question of war, I would like to ask a few questions of this audience. Can we in all seriousness contemplate a war against the Soviet Union. It would be just the same as the men in the shipyard deciding to go to war with the men from Short & Harland's. It means that the working sections attack each other. It would be the same as the 15 to 20 thousand workers in the shipyards going to war with the 20 thousand linen workers.

"If we want to fight, if we want to make war, and I suggest there is not one man in this audience who wants war; then I suggest to you that to make war on a working class country is to make war on yourself. It is like a boomerang, it will come back.

"Can we go to war with the Soviet Union? I say that these people today who are talking about standing up to the Russians have no understanding, and still have learned very little from what the last war should have taught everyone of us.

"Those of you who are talking about going to war with the Soviet Union, understand, that you are denying to your children the right to have schools. If your thinking of making war on the Soviet Union you cannot have a decent way of living. You are now living on credit from America, and if you are talking about going to war with the Soviet Union; if 15 million pounds per day can be found to fight a war against the working class, why is it that the Labour Government cannot find 15 million pounds to give the people the necessities of life since the war ended.

"Will we go to war beside France? I can assure you that from my own knowledge of the French Communist Party the French workers will not fight any war against the Soviet Union.

"Will we fight beside Belgium? We will not fight beside Belgium with their Spaaks. The Belgian working class know who their own leaders are.

"And do you think the Italian workers are going to turn their guns on the Soviet Union? Do you think that the British workers are going to be fooled? Do you think the Northern Ireland workers are going to be taken in again? If unemployment is mounting it is the fault of the Tory government, not the fault of the Soviet Union.

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If our wages don't meet the cost of living it is the fault of the Tories and Capitalists of Northern Ireland. Our fight is here at home. What would we fight for against the Soviet Union? Are you going to fight for the Lords of Wall Street?

"The only way that we can make our conditions better is not under Capitalism but under socialism, and these people understand it very well. If we are allowed to build our political parties, strengthen ourselves and unite, then these Capitalists may have to give up the means of production."

Here she gave examples of how America planned to use the Western Powers as bases in the war anticipated. France would supply the Army, Greece would be used as a base and Ireland as an aircraft carrier.

She ended her address by giving an example of the huge profits being made in the linen industry, and called on the workers to join the Communist Party.

Fredergast then described Communist literature on sale, conducted the throw-in collection and called on the next speaker, W.H. McCullough.

W.H. McCULLOUGH said: "At the end of the recent Labour party conference, there was a little fight over the singing of the Red Flag. A letter appeared in the press by a so-called Labour member, resigning from the Party because the Red Flag was sung on the conclusion of their Conference. The impressions given were that the Red Flag was something foreign. I mention it to give an indication of this trend or development inside the Labour Party, away from the old gospels and the old banners of the past.

"The idea is to convey the impression that the Red Flag is something which only should be associated with Russia, or in other words it is something foreign. And to indicate the interest that was raised on this question I would like to say that I had a phone call from a reporter of the Daily Mail who wanted to know something about the Red Flag. He wanted to know the words of the Red Flag, and I fully obliged him, not from my own memory. I got him the full words and music of the Red Flag, and I told him that it was foreign to the Russians, the words of it were even foreign to the French and the Germans, and that it was even foreign to the English, because the words of the Red Flag were written by an Irishman to the tune of an American song called "Maryland"; and I told him to be very, very careful about this foreign thing the Red Flag because by right it belongs to Ireland because it was written by Jim Connolly, an Irishman, who worked for a period at the Dublin docks.

"I have been telling it over this past number of years and in particular during this past three years, the

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idea in the minds of the people is that Communism is something foreign to the peoples of these islands, but they never tell you for instance that Capitalism is something foreign despite the fact that Capitalism operates in America, on the Continent of Europe, in Britain and at one time operated in Russia until the working class of that country decided to make a change. No, they want to make an enemy of Communism as they fear that if the ideas of Communism are once taken up then the days of Capitalist exploitation will be finished completely".

At this stage he gave an instance of the huge profits of a firm in England which made cable for the Post Office and other engineering businesses, and said that if you read the Daily Worker you will see the instances of immense profit making.

"So when you see in the papers, say Baird's Telegraph, or the Whig, talk about inflation you know what inflation is - too much money chasing too few goods. So what they do about inflation is reduce the money which you have, the wages and salaries. They don't mean the manufacturers.

"Communism, we are told, is something foreign. Capitalism on the other hand is universal and should in no consideration whatever be interfered with. Is there a member of this audience who can recall, within the past four months reading in any of the newspapers what really is the issue in Berlin or how it started. Not at all, that is all being covered up".

Here he went into the usual story about the administration of Germany; how Russian troops by-passed Berlin and that Berlin is by right inside Russian occupation; how the Western powers introduced new currency into Berlin and how they failed to de-Nazify the Ruhr.

"No, I don't think war is imminent and I base my words on this. First of all the Soviet Union will fight consistently day in and day out to avoid bloodshed and plunging the world into another world war.

"As the Communists said many months ago this Island is going to play the role of an aircraft carrier for America. The role of Germany will be to provide a base for attacks on the Soviet Union and America doesn't intend to have another war unless it is fought by the peoples of Western Europe. Are we going to go to war for Wall Street bankers. We are not fighting for any Wall Street bankers. The working class have a struggle to live and that is the struggle they are engaged in. America is counting her chickens a little bit early because the countries of Western Europe, mainly the working class, have given an indication that they are not going to be the cannon fodder of American Imperialism. The Communist Party of France, which represents the vast majority of the working class of France, have already made clear that the workers of France are going to fight no war for Wall Street against the Soviet Union. Montgomery has been appointed the Commander of Western Forces, but the human

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machine is not there and we Communists with the support of the working class are going to see that human machine will not be there, but the human machine will fight for the existence of the working class.

"Sir Basil Brooke desires to play King Billy to Costello's James II, and in fact another battle of the Boyne - 1948 version - is being staged at the time when the people are fooled with this talk of war. Sir Basil is observed galloping through Europe on a white horse looking for Costello, but it is worth while to pay attention to what is going on, particularly with the boys down in the South. Don't anybody be fooled for a single moment by this stuff that is being carried on and this pseudo Republicanism and the war with Basil Brooke. James Dillon and Mr. Costello are firmer, aye much firmer supporters of the British Empire than what Sir Basil Brooke ever was.

"The real issues at stake are the struggle of the people to live, for work, for wages and for houses. That is the issue that faces the people.

"We of the Communist Party want to see our country, North and South, developed to the fullest possible extent. We want to see our people living in harmony and overcoming the antagonism that exists between the two parts of the country. We want to see this country marching forward with the people of Britain. We want to see this country released from the strings of America with the opportunity to live free and independently. And we of the Communist Party are going to see that a struggle along these lines takes place and we are going to see that these plans for plunging the world into another world war will be destroyed. It will be for us to build up in the fight for world peace the defence of the living standards of the people."

Betty Sinclair closed the meeting at 5.30 p.m. by appealing for the audience to join the Communist Party and be united. She said that in the O.D.R. strike of 1932 the people were united and that they can be united now.

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